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March 1, 2017

Dear Education Community:

Exciting changes are coming to Maine's public education system, and I invite you to share your thoughts on the direction it takes. In December 2015 the federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) was signed into law, replacing outdated No Child Left Behind. The new law includes protections for vulnerable students, and creates tools and opportunities for parents, communities and other advocates to support equity for all students and accountability for all schools.

The Maine Department of Education must submit a plan outlining how we will put ESSA's requirements into action. On behalf of our Department, I am pleased to share this initial draft of Maine's State Education Plan, which strives to utilize the new federal law as a vehicle to enhance Maine's strategic plan and educational priorities. We believe that this first draft — which was informed by input of Maine parents, teachers, school and district leaders, higher education leaders, business and industry leaders, and other stakeholders — achieves just that, allowing us to build on the great work being done in Maine's schools today, while moving away from a century-old model of schooling to a more effective, learner-centered approach in the process.

This plan addresses how the Maine Department of Education together with higher education, professional organizations, and others will work to support the success of all our schools, especially those that are the most challenged and provide additional supports to schools and districts to support **all** learners. In the end, our work is to ensure a highly effective workforce of teachers and leaders across the state that is aligned in purpose, supported in their efforts, and motivated to excel in making sure all our students—regardless of background or zip code—get the best possible education. We have a great opportunity to use ESSA as a catalyst for making this happen.

I would like to thank the stakeholders who participated in developing this initial draft. It will require all of us, working together, to achieve our goals. This initial draft is open for public comment until March 30, 2017. This allows the Department to consider all public feedback before submitting the final plan to the United States Department of Education in April 2017.

If you have any comments you'd like to share, please send me a note at ESSA.DOE@maine.gov or call us at 207-624-6669. Thank you so much for your commitment and support.

Sincerely,

Bob

Robert G. Hasson, Jr.

Maine's Approach to Education

A Draft Overview of Maine's State Plan for the
Every Student Succeeds (ESSA) Act



Initial Draft for Public Comment – Released March 1, 2017

Feedback accepted at essa.doe@maine.gov through March 30, 2017

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About the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)

President Obama signed the [Every Student Succeeds Act \(ESSA\)](#) into law in 2015 to reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965 and replace key requirements of the outdated No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001. In 2016, the U.S. Department of Education took the first steps to implement ESSA.

ESSA creates a long-term stable federal policy that gives states additional flexibility and encourages states and schools to innovate, while at the same time being accountable for results. The act generally includes separate authorizations for various programs.

The new law rightly gives states and school districts new flexibility to tailor strategies and interventions to meet the needs of students and schools. This is an opportunity for Maine's rural and isolated populations, in particular, to experience growth on many levels.



Maintaining Our Course: Maine's Plan for Putting Learners First



Education Evolving

["Education Evolving: Maine's Plan for Putting Learners First"](#) is the strategic plan that sets out objectives and action steps for building an education system in Maine that meets the needs of all learners, from early childhood into adulthood, and prepares them for college, careers, and civic life.

In January 2012, the Maine Department of Education (DOE) released the plan based on input received from visits with educators, parents, students, and others across the state during a listening tour throughout 2011.

Education Evolving lays out an ongoing plan to transition Maine schools to a model in which students have more of a role in organizing their education and more choice in deciding how they master academic standards.

Education Evolving is shaped around five core priority areas that address the various elements of building an education system focused on the needs of all learners:



Though much has been accomplished under Maine's plan, continued work lies ahead. ESSA provides Maine educators with important supports to continue our work of educating all students. We are not changing direction from our course established under *Education Evolving*. Rather, through ESSA, we gain new flexibilities for supporting our work for Maine's students and schools.

Maine DOE's Overarching Goal:

By 2030 90% of Maine's students will graduate college and career ready

Maine's Significant Accomplishments

As Maine has implemented *Education Evolving*, significant accomplishments have been made that are also reflected in the plans for ESSA. These include:

Key Legislation

- Evaluation of Public Schools ([LD 1253](#))
 - Beginning in the 2016-2017 school year, the State began implementation of LD 1253, "An Act to Improve the Evaluation of Public Schools." The task force assigned to help implement LD 1253 has influenced Maine's draft ESSA plan.
- Performance Evaluation and Professional Growth (PEPG) Systems ([Rule 180](#))
 - Also beginning in the 2016-2017 school year, all districts began using the new PEPG systems for teachers and principals. These multi-measure systems were submitted for State approval and included at least the following two measures:
 - Professional Practice
 - Student Learning and Growth
- Proficiency-Based Diplomas ([LD 1422](#))
 - Maine remains on track to have graduating students demonstrate proficiency in all content areas. Significant progress has been made long before ESSA articulated a well-rounded education.



Equitable Access to Excellent Educators Planning

After nearly a year of planning and collaborating with stakeholders across the state, Maine received approval from the U.S. Department of Education in August 2015 to implement [Maine's equity plan](#) to ensure students have equitable access to excellent educators.

This plan focuses on three key areas that integrate well with the direction of our strategic plan and ESSA plan:



- Recruitment and Retention
- State Policy-Driven Incentives
- Educator Preparation Enhancements

Engaging Stakeholders to Inform the Plan

Diverse Perspectives

The Maine Department of Education has worked over the past year to engage stakeholders across the state to both inform colleagues of opportunities afforded by ESSA, and listen to what has worked and not worked in the past. This information has been invaluable to the planning process and makes this plan a true reflection of the direction Maine intends to advance in the future. The passion of our colleagues has been both inspiring and affirming that great things are in our future.

Engagement experiences took several forms, including:

- Integrated sessions during existing meeting times
 - Committee of Practitioners meetings
 - Commissioner's Conference 2016
 - ESEA Summer Professional Development
 - English Language Coordinator meeting
 - Joint Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs meeting
- ESSA Advisory Council
- ESSA Workgroups
- Statewide professional organizations
- Statewide survey
- Emails and phone calls with Maine DOE
- Department of Education team meetings
- Partner conversations with national consultants



What We Heard

In terms of the statewide survey, some clear patterns emerged with regard to how schools should be identified and supported:

- Keep it simple on a few key measures
- Balance educator inputs with student outputs
- Prioritize growth over achievement but include both
- Compare schools to a standard, not each other
- Include college and career readiness
- Recognize both the top-performing and lowest-performing schools
- Support lowest-performing schools the most
- Identify achievement gaps in need of being addressed

Recognizing and Supporting Schools through the Review Process

Driving Principles

Since December of 2011, Maine has engaged in statewide discussion leading to the following principles for Maine's differentiated recognition, accountability, and support system:

- Establish rigorous learning standards and expectations in reading and mathematics
- Identify and provide targeted and specialized support for Maine's lowest performing schools
- Identify and provide targeted and specialized support for Maine schools with the greatest achievement gaps
- Provide schools and districts with annual accountability reports with ambitious long-term and interim goals that require every school and district to improve academic success for every student subgroup
- Ensure that every Maine school benefits from the instructional practices, organizational design, leadership approaches, and successful parent and community partnerships in place
- Develop a system of statewide and regional supports, including vibrant networks that nurture and grow the capacity for educational excellence envisioned for the state of Maine. These will be made available to all schools, regardless of Title I status or performance.



School Review Indicators

Under ESSA, a state identifies multiple indicators to review that help recognize and support each of its schools. Below are the indicators—and further details of those indicators—that Maine is pursuing, while understanding that additional data analysis is needed to ensure these will best meet our goals. Acknowledging the number of small schools in Maine, we have identified a minimum “n” size of 10, so that reporting will only reflect populations and subgroups that have 10 students or more.

Indicator	Measure(s)	Description
Academic Achievement	Proficiency rate on annual State assessments (eMPower™ME for Grades 3-8 and SAT for Grade 11)	Percent of students who are proficient in the annual statewide assessments
Academic Progress	Progress on annual State assessments (eMPower™ME for Grades 3-8 and SAT for Grade 11)	Specific measures to be determined following review of data trends
Graduation Rate	Adjusted cohort graduation rates (4-, 5-, and 6-year)	The percent of students who graduate on time (4 years) and extended periods (5 and 6 years)
Progress in Achieving English Language Proficiency	English Learner progress	Specific measures to be determined following review of data trends
School Quality or Student Success	K-12: Consistent attendance	The percent of students at a school who have regular attendance

School performance on these indicators will be reported annually in the form of a report card to inform the appropriate publics of school performance, and to identify what level of State support is needed.

Note: College and career readiness was an important indicator to many in the ESSA planning process. Over the next year or so, Maine DOE will explore college and career ready indicators as well as the related data sources and definitions needed.

School Supports

Maine's proposed statewide system of support is designed to provide implementation of a unified state system directly focused on improving the academic achievement of all students. It is important for each Maine school to continuously improve, so Maine DOE has outlined key features each school should incorporate as a part of its improvement planning process.

School Improvement Planning – All Schools

Each school in Maine will develop a school improvement plan reflecting the following expectations:

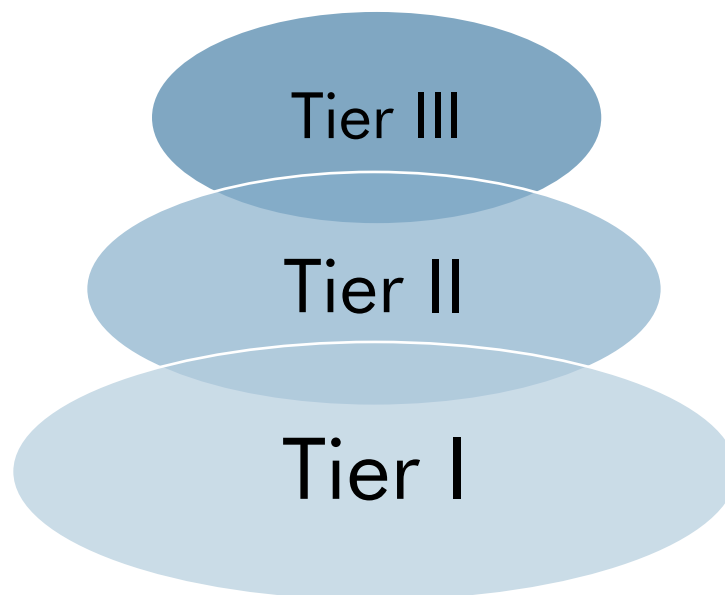
- Establish a school leadership team including the principal, staff representing content and student groups, parents, students where appropriate/possible, and district leadership
- Differentiate the school's improvement plan elements aligning to the school's level of challenge and priority of needs
- Assess and implement key principles of school success:
 - Strong leadership
 - Staff evaluation and professional development (PD)
 - Expanded time for student learning and teacher collaboration
 - Rigorous, aligned instruction
 - Use of data for school improvement and instruction
 - Positive school and classroom culture
 - Family and community engagement
- Assess and implement key improvement indicators:
 - **Identification process** for all students at risk of failing or in need of targeted interventions
 - **Tiered, differentiated intervention process** to assign research-based interventions aligned to individual needs of identified students
 - **Monitoring process** for targeted intervention students to ensure fidelity and effectiveness
- Develop tasks to address challenge areas and measure progress—all schools may use DirigoStar to help document and monitor interventions and tasks
- Have plans and tasks reviewed by school improvement coaches and the Maine Department of Education (DOE)
- Monitor plans quarterly (DOE will monitor plans at least annually)



A Tiered Approach to State Support

In accordance with *Education Evolving*, all schools in Maine will continue to receive coordinated and effective State support. Based on school performance as measured by the school review indicators, each school will be placed into one of three tiers:

Tier	School Review Results	Level of Support	Types of Support	Examples of Support
Tier I	School is meeting expectations	General, Statewide and Regionalized Support	Comprehensive Education Plan in place	Content area specialist support, regional representative support
Tier II	School is below state expectations in specific, targeted accountability indicators	Targeted, Directed District and School Support	Increased supports to assist with the implementation of the Comprehensive Education Plan	School Improvement Coach
Tier III	School is below expectations across multiple required accountability indicators	Comprehensive, Directed School Support	Increased supports to assist with the implementation of the Comprehensive Education Plan	School Improvement Coach

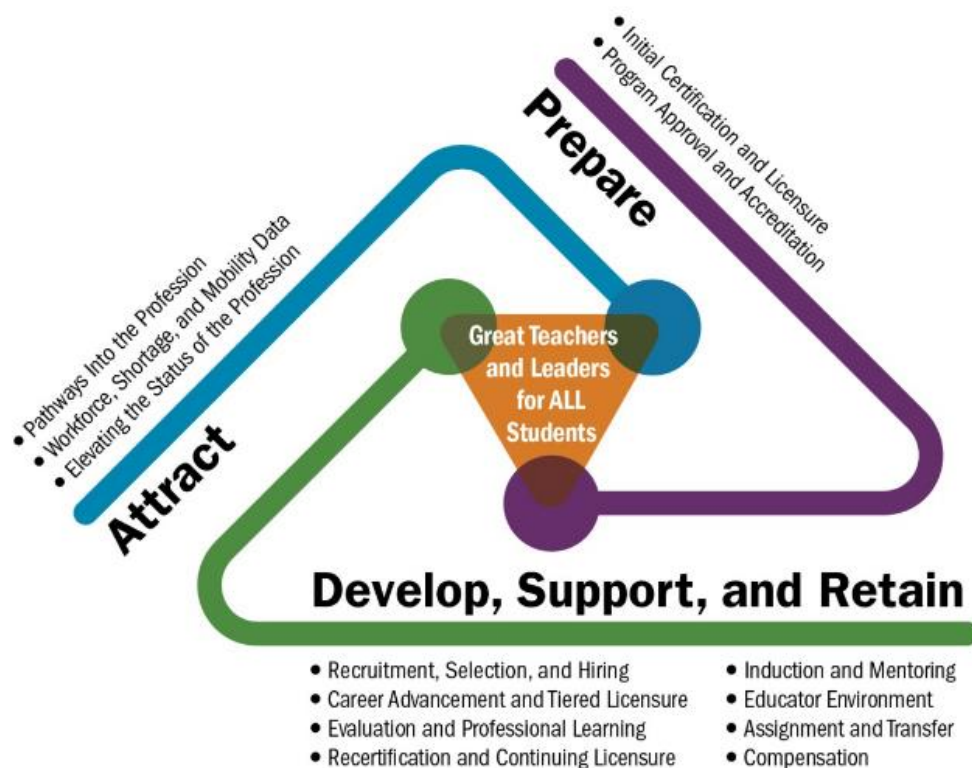


Supporting Excellent Educators

Establishing a Framework



As with the other parts of the ESSA plan, Maine’s strategic plan—*Education Evolving*—forms the framework for Maine’s support of educators. Maine has made significant accomplishments in this core priority area, most notably the full implementation of Performance Evaluation and Professional Growth (PEPG) systems this 2016-2017 school year. Maine also continues to implement its federally-approved [plan to ensure equitable access to excellent educators for all students](#) to further the goals of the strategic plan and help ensure each student has great teachers and leaders. Maine has used a framework established by the Center for Great Teachers and Leaders to help envision our approach to supporting excellent educators:



Educator Preparation

The Maine DOE has established an Educator Preparation and Employment PK-16 Leadership Council whose charge is to examine the career continuum of teachers and school leaders and propose solutions that support closer connections between higher education programs of education and PK-12 classrooms.

Educator preparation enhancements also form one of three of Maine's key approaches to ensuring students have equitable access to excellent educators. The two avenues Maine is pursuing for enhancing educator preparation include:

- Strengthening preparation programs
- Revising certification requirements



Educator Growth and Development Systems

Legislation

As a result of LD 1858, "An Act to Ensure Effective Teaching and School Leadership" was passed, which required school districts to establish a teacher-majority steering committee, and directed the new systems to include:

- Professional practice standards
- A 4-point rating scale to differentiate educator performance
- Multiple measures of effectiveness, including student learning and growth
- Observations of practice
- Summative ratings to inform human-capital decision-making

Maine Schools for Excellence

The Maine Schools for Excellence (MSFE) have helped lead the way for Maine's new evaluation systems and other human capital management system supports. This group of schools has been supported by two five-year federal grants. They have been a key player informing the new PEPG systems coming online, as well as sharing successes and challenges Maine will be addressing at a larger scale.

Educator Support

Maine DOE provides supports to educators through many opportunities. A significant example supporting the new PEPG systems, is that in concert with the Northeast Comprehensive Center, the Maine DOE has trained over 200 educators directly on the student learning and growth component in 10 different locations across the state. Maine will continue to support PEPG efforts along with districts' implementation of other significant efforts, such as proficiency-based diplomas.

The DOE will also continue its efforts to ensure educators in all districts have the requisite knowledge, skills, and abilities to identify students' specific learning needs and more importantly, deliver instruction based on those needs. Some examples include:

- **Math4ME:** State-facilitated professional learning for special educators and classroom teachers to build and revise the fidelity check instrument
- **Connecting Mathematics Instruction: Digging Deep into the Content:** State-developed professional development (PD) to support teachers' understanding of student learning progressions and to collect teacher-developed tools and resources for distribution



Educator Equity

As referenced earlier, Maine's [plan to ensure equitable access to excellent educators for all students](#) significantly guides the work of educator effectiveness. Maine DOE is currently pursuing five areas to support LEAs in advancing equity—largely informed by the MSFE accomplishments:

- **Educator Preparation and Employment:** Deliver important content on instructional and leadership practice and other needed topics through the Educator Preparation and Employment PK-16 Leadership Council
- **Educator Evaluation and Professional Growth:** Support PEPG calibration for evaluators, explore micro-credentialing for specific PD offerings, and support districts' work to advance the quality of student learning and growth measures
- **School Environment:** Leverage MSFE resources to measure and address classroom climate, school climate, and professional culture
- **Recognition and Reward:** Support districts exploring alternative educator pay structures
- **Best Practice Clearinghouse:** Collect district-submitted tools and resources for sharing

Supporting All Students

Continuum of Success

As seen in *Education Evolving*, Maine DOE is dedicated to putting students first. Throughout a PK-12 continuum, Maine DOE is committed to supporting successful transitions for students at key junctures in their educational journey.

Early Childhood Supports

Maine DOE has a number of supports in place to advance districts' work with students in early childhood education:

- [Public Preschool Program Standards](#)
- Early Childhood Professional Learning Communities (PLCs)
- Kindergarten Curriculum Alignment
- Kindergarten Entry Assessment (KEA)
- Principal Leadership in early Childhood Education
- Literacy for ME
- Family Engagement Efforts



K-12 Supports

Maine DOE provides content-specific support to K-12 educators to help students achieve [Maine's K-12 Learning Results](#).

English Language Arts Supports:

- English Language Arts Professional Learning
- Working Smarter, Not Harder Formative Assessment Network (FAN)
- College Board and DOE Collaboration for Professional Support
- Literacy Faculty Group and Celebrating Children's Literature Conference
- MoMEntum K-3 Literacy Pilot
- K-3 Formative Assessment
- CTE and ELA Intersections
- Collaborate Support for Professional Learning



Mathematics Supports:

- Early Mathematical Diagnostic and Intervention
- Math4ME
- Connecting Mathematics Instruction: Digging Deep into the Content
- Maine Community of Teacher Leaders (MCTL)
- Certificate in Math Leadership: University of Maine at Farmington
- Maine Mathematics Coaching Project: University of Maine at Farmington
- Focus/Priority School
- CTE Intersection Workshops
- Development of a New Certification: Mathematics Instructional Leaders



Science and Technology Supports:

- Formative Assessment and Three Dimensional Instruction in Science
- Supporting the Development of Pedagogical and Content Knowledge of Teachers



Health Education and Physical Education Supports:

- Health Education (HE) and Physical Education (PE) Professional Learning
- School Health Profiles
- Teacher Leadership Development



Visual and Performing Arts (VPA) Supports:

- Creative Assessment Webinar Series
- Creative Assessment Cohorts (Northern and Southern)
- Fresh Chapters Book Study
- Arts Integration Resource Project Fellows
- Creating Artful Early Childhood Classrooms
- VPA Assessment Conference



Ensuring a Well-Rounded Education

Long before ESSA required equitable access to a well-rounded education, Maine had instituted proficiency-based diplomas that reflected student mastery of all eight content areas. Those content areas include:

- Career & Education Development
- English Language Arts
- Health Education & Physical Education
- Mathematics
- Science & Technology
- Social Studies
- Visual & Performing Arts
- World Languages

Maine provides multiple pathways for supporting students' attainment of mastery in these areas:

- Advanced placements
- Adult education
- Alternative education programs
- Career academies
- Career and technical education
- Dual enrollment
- Gifted and talented programs
- Independent study
- Internships
- Online courses



Other Student Supports

Specific programs and initiatives are also being implemented and/or explored as a part of ESSA.

Anti-Bullying and School Climate

- Maine DOE will review current priorities to consider funding, such as anti-bullying and school climate needs.

Technology

- The MoMEntum K-3 Literacy Pilot provides 1-to-1 iPad technology for students and professional learning for teachers to use technology to boost literacy achievement.
- The Collaborate Support for Professional Learning initiative works to identify current needs of teachers, which recently pointed to the use of technology to improve literacy.

Title I, Part A: Improving Basic Programs Operated by State and Local Education Agencies

- Each School Administrative Unit (SAU) designates the program type and poverty measure in its Comprehensive Education Plan and for each school it seeks to serve with Title I funds; the 40% poverty threshold for schoolwide services can be waived depending on the justification for the request (e.g., decision being data-based with a clear plan to address all students).

Title I, Part C: Education of Migratory Children

- Maine has an Identification Team and State Director that work to identify all migrant seasonal and temporary work in the state to successfully identify and recruit children of these families into Maine's education system.

Title I, Part D: Prevention and Intervention Programs for Children and Youth who are Neglected, Delinquent, or At-Risk

- Project Impact provides services to support transition of students from correctional facilities to local school districts; Maine DOE works closely with correctional school staff to ensure appropriate options for transition services.



Title III, Part A: Language Instruction for English Learners (ELs) and Immigrant Students

- Since 2004, Maine DOE has required each SAU to have a plan to administer [Maine's Home Language Survey \(HLS\)](#) to every newly enrolled student; when a language other than English is indicated, the WIDA ACCESS Placement Test (W-APT) is administered, with a composite score of level 6 defining English language proficiency in Maine.
- Maine's [guide to serving ELs](#) is rooted in policy found in [Letter #56](#).

Title IV, Part B: 21st Century Community Learning Centers

- Maine offers grants to support Maine's disadvantaged student populations; these grants allow schools across the state to provide students with an alternative learning environment beyond the traditional school day.

Title V, Part B, Subpart 2: Rural and Low-Income School Program

- Each SAU's comprehensive educational plan will inform the specific program objectives and outcomes for each eligible SAU.

McKinney-Vento Act

- Students experiencing homelessness will primarily be the SAU's responsibility with ongoing training from Maine DOE provided as well as support offered through the National Technical Assistance Provider.



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